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A PLAIN ANSWER

to the pamphlet

"The true Religion is not in the Bible."

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A leaflet entitled "The True Religion is not in the Bible" was lately placed in my hands, with the assurance that it came from a very learned man and was destined to toll the parting knell of the Christian Religion.

Who the learned man is, I do not know, but what I do well know is that if the author is a learned man, the leaflet in question contains statements which are simply amazing.

1) There is not in the leaflet a single line that is new, not a single objection coming from its author: every thing in it is old and stale and every doubt raised has been solved over and over again.

2) The author of the leaflet seems not to have read the Bible at all, or, at least, to have very wrong notions concerning its use and authority, believing **the Bible and the Bible only to be the Christian Religion.**

Now, I would draw his attention to the following few remarks, which will prevent him from repeating in future the blunders with which his short leaflet abounds.

(*a*) There were thousands of Christians before ever a word of the New Testament was committed to writing, and who, therefore, were Christians without having read the Bible.

(*b*) The Bible lays down the conditions on which men are to know the true Religion and to be saved; but reading the Bible is not one of these conditions.

Jesus Christ says: "*Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned.*" *(Mark* XVI*—15, 16.)*

"*He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me.*" *(Luke* X*—16.)*

The condition, therefore, to be saved is to hear and believe the teaching of those whom Jesus Christ has sent and to join the Church He has founded

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(*c*) **Jesus Christ founded His one and only true Church, not upon the Bible, but upon a living authority:**

"*Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" (*Math.* XVI—*18.*)

(*d*) Jesus Christ gave command to His Apostles to teach all nations "*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*" (*Math.* XXVIII—*19, 20*)—On the other hand, the Bible says most positively that there are many other things which Jesus Christ did and which are not recorded in the Bible. (*John* XXI—*25.*)

Therefore something more than the Bible is required to know what Jesus Christ has taught.

(*e*) The Bible is a book which, indeed, contains only the word of God, although not the whole of it; but **no book, however divine, can be an authority to itself,** but it must have been received and handed down to us by another authority distinct from it. Moreover, every book, even though it should contain the true Revelation of God, nay, every passage in it, is liable to be interpreted in many contradictory ways, **if left to the private interpretation of individuals, without an infallible living and undying authority,** which received the book from God, its Author, preserved it unchanged and incorrupt through all ages and has, for its special mission, to preserve and give its true meaning.

Without such an authority, we should only have confusion and contradiction—not unity, which ought however to be the characteristic of the true Religion.

The truth of this fact may be seen in the case of those who say "*the Bible and the Bible only without any living authority is the Christian Religion.*" They are divided into a great number of sects or churches at variance with each other.

Surely, if God has given a Revelation, and Reason proves that He has given one, He has not entrusted it to the capricious interpretations of man, but has left a **living authority** to preserve, teach and explain the true meaning of that Revelation.

(*f*) Now, as every one knows or may know, if he but consults history, the Catholic Church is that only true Church founded by Jesus Christ. "*Upon the rock and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail*" and that she is "*the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth.*" (*I. Timot.* III—*15.*)

She it was, then, that received the Bible into her keeping and she it was that had to preserve it incorrupt, to defend it against the false interpretations which men, swayed by their passions, prejudices, or party-spirit, might wish to put upon it, and to explain its true meaning until the end of the world without any fear of ever falling into error:

"*And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" (*Math.* XXVIII. *19*, *20*).

"*And He shall give you another comforter, that may abide with you for ever even the Spirit of truth.*" (*John* XIV. *16*, *17*).

(*g*) It follows, then, as a consequence of the remarks made above, that, if any one wishes to read the Bible and know what it teaches,

(1) he should, in the first place, consult **the true Bible,** viz., the one received and preserved by the true Church;

(2) if any passage occurs to him, the meaning of which appears obscure to him, he should consult the explanation given by the same **true Church the Guardian of the Scripture.**

It is only after having done this, that he can fairly attack the Bible if the explanation given does not satisfy him. Should he proceed in any other way, he simply shows that his attacks are wanton and that his aim is not the search after truth.

(3) Had the author of the leaflet made the above reflections and taken the trouble to consult the **true Bible,** he would not have misrepresented it as he has done several times: had he read the Catholic Commentaries, he would have found a ready answer to all his imaginary historical difficulties.

(4) Had he, even once, opened the true Bible, he would surely not have found in it that which it does not contain and which **I defy him,** in the face of the whole universe, to show me as being found in it.

(5) Had the author of the leaflet known but the A B C of Archeology and of other sciences, he would not have been startled at what he calls exaggerations in the Bible.

(6) Had he only been **fair enough to quote the whole text** from the "*Leviticus*," as found in the true Bible, it would have been apparent at once that God, as represented in the Bible, is not childish·

(7) Had he only read the book of "*Wisdom*" which the true Bible contains, he would have found therein the full explanation of the pretended cruelties of God.

But the author of the leaflet would not do or understand these things, and thought it would be easier work to use second-hand and worn out arguments that he hoped would take with the unlearned.

The general answers I have given would be sufficient to refute all the arguments brought forward by the author of the leaflet: in order, however, to give a warning to the youthful generation, not to believe at once and lightly what is said against the Bible, I will for this time take the trouble of answering in details the various accusations against the teaching of the Bible, as stated in the above mentioned leaflet.

1st. OBJECTION.

(*a*) The author of the leaflet says in the first objection: "The Christian Revelation is but a collection of the fragmentary writings of a **few individuals.**" And then, in the same breath, he complains that it is made up of "accounts etc...springing not from any one mind, but from **scores and hundreds of minds,** and not from one age but from many ages."

Answer:—Now, surely this is strange logic! The Christian Revelation is first condemned or shown not to have the truth, 1) **because it comes from a few individuals** and then it is found fault with 2) **because it comes from scores and hundreds of minds or individuals.**

Let the author first tell us which of the two accusations he wishes to bring forward. Moreover, whether Revelation comes through few or many is a point which tells us nothing concerning its truth or falsehood; for if it be admitted that God can make a Revelation, nothing prevents His speaking to as many as He pleases, but His utterances will all be in harmony.

(*b*) Next the author says: "We have in it (the Christian Revelation) a group of legends, traditions, accounts of persons and events mostly imaginary."

Answer:—As the events related in the Bible are, according to him, mostly imaginary, I suppose he will have no difficulty to prove one **at least,** to be imaginary. When I say "prove", I mean that he will give us something more than his mere assertions, for, assertion, **without proofs,** is valueless.

Now I challenge him to prove a single fact in the Bible to be imaginary. Let him take up the gauntlet, there is a fair opportunity for him.

(*c*) The third part of his objection runs as follows:—

"*In a large part of the book of Psalms a later hand has substituted Elohim for Jehovah.*"

answer:—I presume the author means the exact opposite of what he says, as it is the word Jehovah that has been substituted for Elohim. We think, when a person undertakes to make criticisms of this nature, he should at least be accurate.

Now what does his argument come to and how does it prove the falsehood of the Bible? A few words will make it clear.

Elohim and Jehovah are two Hebrew words, exactly synonymous, which were applied to God, one being more commonly used at one time and the other at another time although never exclusively.

How, because one author uses either one of the two words or both of them indiscriminately, or a copyist replaces the word Elohim (God) by Jehovah (God), such a change can cause the Bible not to contain the true Revelation, is an assertion which no serious man will ever accept.

What will he say then of the English and Latin Bibles where neither **Elohim** nor **Jehovah,** but **God** and **Deus** are to be found?

(*d*) The next attack of the author is against the book of Job. He says: "In the book of Job, the speeches of Elihu quite break the connection, and are almost universally assigned to a later hand."

Answer:—Any one, who will take the trouble to read the book of Job, will have no difficulty to convince himself that there is no breaking of connection and that the introduction of Elihu is not only justifiable but

necessary, as he has to develop reasons and arguments which could neither be placed on the lips of Job's other friends nor be supposed to come from God.

As to the assertion that "the speeches are almost universally assigned to a later hand," the author, is very careful, as usual, to make an assertion without proof, and so we will wait until he tells us who they are that almost universally assign it to a later hand.

(*e*) "This is as true of the New Testament as of the Old" says the author.

Answer:—A gratuitous assertion is sufficiently answered by a simple negation.

(*f*) "The number of readings in the New Testament alone is about 150,000."
Answer:—I wonder how the author of the leaflet could have so far forgotten himself and his cause as to bring as an argument against the New Testament, the very fact which, better than any other perhaps, shows its truth and displays God's wonderful providence in favour of the Christian Religion.

In fact, almost immediately after its composition, and many centuries before the introduction of Printing, the New Testament was translated into many different languages such as Arabic, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopian, Gothic, etc., etc.,......Copies of it were everywhere taken, which fact necessarily exposed the New Testament to be corrupted by the unskilful hands of so many different copyists.

The modern enemies of Christianity thought they had found an excellent method to prove the falsehood of the New Testament by collecting all the manuscripts they could discover from the 3rd century upwards to the sixteenth and showing that there were in them passages or readings which contradicted the doctrines taught in the received copies of the New Testament.

Now what has been the result of this laborious and acute research? "Nothing has been discovered, no not one single various reading, which can throw doubt upon any passage before considered certain or decisive in favour of any important doctrine. These various readings, almost without any exception, leave untouched the essential parts of any sentence, and only interfere with points of secondary importance, the insertion or omission of an article or conjunction, the more accurate grammatical construction, the forms rather than the substance of words." (*Card. Wiseman*) Let the author of the leaflet then show how these readings prove that the True Revelation is not in the Bible.

2nd OBJECTION.

"The Bible contains many things **intrinsically** absurd:—Jonah lived three days within a fish; a serpent and an ass talk; Nebuchadnezzar ate grass for seven years. When such legends are found in other religions, the Christians are never tired of abusing them as absurd and incredible. In the Bible, they must be at least equally absurd and incredible."

Answer:—I wonder in what school of philosophy the author of the leaflet has learned his notion of a thing being intrinsically absurd. An idea is said to be intrinsically absurd when it contains notions which, from their very essence, are incompatible with one another, as, a **square circle** a **crooked straight line,** the assertions that a man **exists** and **does not**

exist at the same time. A thing that is absurd cannot be conceived as existing or as having any possibility to exist. Now I defy the author to show us how what he calls **intrinsically absurd** in the Bible is really so; how, for instance, it cannot be conceived that God, the Creator of every thing, should, by a direct act of intervention, preserve a man alive for three days in the belly of a huge fish.

I suppose that what the author of the leaflet really means is that the facts referred to above are **physically** or **humanly** impossible; but then I suppose the Bible nowhere affirms that those facts were brought about by natural means or without the intervention of some superior agent.

As to his complaint about the Christians, it is quite groundless: The Christians will not refuse to admit facts which are proved to be historically true: what they will never do is to allow mere legends or the creations of a poet's fancy to be passed off as true facts.

I can well imagine that the Christians should not be too credulous but should ask for proofs when they are invited to believe or admit that Brahma lost one of his heads as a punishment for a very wicked action; that Vishnu became a **hog** in his third avatar, the tree Ravi or Aruli in his ninth avatar, in order to satisfy his impure desires towards the virtuous daughter of a Giant: that Krishna was a "*stealer of the clothes of the young gopis*," and yet that Brahma, Krishna or Vishnu are God; that when the moon is eclipsed it is because it has been swallowed by a dragon, that in the middle of the earth is a mountain called Mount Meru, the height of which is 84,000 yojanas (several thousands of miles,) that there are seven island continents surrouded by seven seas: the sea of cane juice, the sea of spirituous liquors: etc., etc., etc.

3rd OBJECTION.

In the Bible there are statements proved by History to be false:—It is stated in Luke that Augustus Cæsar issued a decree "that all the world should be taxed," and that it was in connection with this decree that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, and that, while they were there, Jesus was born. In the first place there was no such decree issued by the Roman Emperor to **tax the whole world**; the decree was limited to Judea and Samaria, and Joseph in Nazareth could not have been affected by it. Secondly this did not take place until ten years after the death of Herod and not in the reign of Herod, as the account of Luke states. Thirdly the Governor of Syria at the time of the birth of Jesus was not Quirinus as is stated by the Bible, but Quintus Sentius Saturninus. Other similar errors may be quoted. Is the Bible then infallible?

ANSWER. We have here a very serious accusation, and no other alternation is possible—either the Bible asserts what is proved to be historically false or the author of the leaflet advanced what he knew nothing about.

I will take the three parts of the accusation, give the historical proofs and then leave the readers to draw the conclusion.

The passage against which the author directs his attacks runs thus in the Catholic Bible: "And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be **enrolled.** This **enrolment** was first made by Cyrinus or Quirinus, the Governor of Syria."

N. B.—To enroll (i. e.) to take the census.

Among the Romans the expression **"the whole world"** was employed to denote, not what we understand at present by *the whole world or earth* but

simply the whole of the Roman world, the rest of the world scarcely counting for anything in the eyes of the proud heathen Romans. To give to the expression any other meaning would be simply a display of the most unpardonable ignorance.

The author of the leaflet, then, asserts that Augustus never issued such a general decree to take the census of the *whole* Roman empire, or, as he puts it, "to tax the whole world," the decree of Augustus applying only to two provinces, viz. Samaria and Judea.

But, does he give any historical proofs for his assertion ? None at all, and that very wisely, for he could quote no historian affirming that there was no general census taken. The utmost he could do would be to assert that the historian Dion is silent on the subject.

But do historians really assert that there was a general census ? Let the readers look at the following lines and judge for themselves.

(1) Tacitus, the best and most serious of all the Roman historians, and no lover of the Christians, says in his *Annals* that Augustus ordered a general census report called "*Breviarium imperii*" to be composed during his reign. In this book were entered all the resources of the Empire, its citizens and allies, the kingdoms that were attached to it, the tax paid by the provinces, etc., etc. (*Tacit. Ann.* I, II). From these words it is quite clear that Augustus ordered a general census of the whole Roman world to be taken.

(2) Suetonius confirms this statement in very clear terms (*Suet. Aug.* XXXIII,XLXIII, CI).

(3) Cyrillus (*Lib. Contra. Julian.*) and Orosius affirm that this census was consigned among the Roman archives.

(4) Cassiodorus says: "*Under the reign of Augustus the Roman world was divided into several dominions and provinces and a general census was made, etc...*" (*Cassiod. Var.* III. 52).

(5) Justinus, the philosopher, after his conversion to Christianity, wrote in A.D. 138, an apology which he presented to the Emperor Antoninus. In it he says: "*Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem. Your majesty may ascertain this fact by consulting the book of census made by Quirinus your first Governor of Judea.*" —(*Just..* I *Apol. 35*). How could he have dared thus address the Emperor, if the fact of which he spoke in his Apology had not been true? How shall we, in the face of such evidence, qualify the assertion of the author of the leaflet that there was no general decree passed by Augustus?

A. The author says next that the partial census which he admits did not take place until ten years after the death of Herod and therefore not under Quirinus, because he supposes that only one census was taken in the reign of Augustus. Had he read Justin mentioned above, he would have seen that Quirinus was the first Roman Governor of Judea and that a census was taken in his time. Had he kept himself acquainted with the modern discoveries of archœlogy, he would have learned, that there are still extant fragments of the marble mausoleum of Ancyra in Galatia set up by Augustus to commemorate the events of his reign, where it is stated that Augustus made at least **three** census. He would have learned besides that an inscription found at Tivoli (*the ancient Tibur*) which everybody can see in the Lateran Museum, tells us that Quirinus was sent twice to Syria as Governor during the reign of Augustus, the first time corresponding with the time of the birth of Jesus Christ. Being a brave general, he was despatched against some wild tribes in the Taurus mountains, Saturninus being appointed Governor of Judea during his absence, and he came back a second time as Governor of Syria after the death of Herod.

C. From the above facts and statements it is evident that the Governor of Syria at the time of the birth of Jesus Christ was Quirinus and not Quintus Sentius Saturninus, as affirmed by the author of the leaflet.

4th OBJECTION.

(*a*) The author of the leaflet says: "There are also errors of a more obvious nature in the Bible: In the book of Leviticus, the hare is said to chew the cud. Does the hare chew the cud?"—

ANSWER.—I will refer my readers to Mr. Milne Edwards, (Comptes rendus de l'Academie des Sciences Vol. LXIX, p. 1285), where the celebrated zoologist shows, from the hebrew word, that the animal of which there is question in the Bible, is a small mammiferous animal called among the Hebrews Hyrax or Daman. It is neither hare nor rabbit nor does it even belong to the family of rodent animals, but belongs to a species of a quite different zoological order.—

How is the *Hyrax* then called *hare* in some of the translations of the Bible? For the very simple reason that the Hyrax in its outward appearance, has some resemblance with the hare, and the translator of the Bible having in his language no word corresponding to the hebrew word *Hyrax*, because the animal did not exist in the country where the lauguage of the translator was used, and being but imperfectly acquainted with the habits of the *animal*, called it, for want of a better name, *hare or rabbit*, a name which to him seemed best fitted to give an idea of the animal to his readers. Is this strange? surely not; for in our own days we have many instance of the kind which, however, are not called errors.—The small animal called in this country *Simei Perichali* (சீமை பெருச்சாளி) when first made known to the English, was called Guinea pig. Now is it implied by this that it is really a pig? Surely not; but the fancy traces some likeness to the pig in the outward apperance of the guinea pig and calls it guinea-pig, although every one knows that the guinea-pig has as much connection with the pig as the cat has with the rhinoceros or the hippopotamus.

Reading, therefore, the passage as its stands: "The *hare-hyrax* (which indeed does chew the cud) cheweth the cud" the Bible affirms nothing but what is perfectly true.

(*b*) *Objection.*—**The story of creation in six days** and of rest after the labour of creation is **unscientific** and would be considered ridiculous by the Christians themselves, if found in any other book. The earth, it is said, was created some 6000 years ago. Now Geology has conclusively established that the earth has been in existence for many millions of years. The believers in the Bible are driven to many a pitiable shift to escape from the unscientific facts that stand in the way of the credibility of the Bible."

ANSWER.—1. "The earth, it is said, was created some 6000 years ago."

"It is said"—where? The author does not tell us. As, however, he means proving that the Bible does not contain the true Revelation, we are to suppose he grounds his assertion on the Bible.

Now, **I defy** him to point out one single passage from the Bible which asserts either directly or indirectly or which even makes the slightest allusion to the fact that the earth was created some 6000 years ago. The author had, no doubt, hear d of the creation of man being mentioned in connection with the Bible as having taken place some 6000 years ago, and without making any further inquiry,

he thought that the same date was also fixed in it for the creation of the earth. Had he but read the first three lines of the Bible, he would have seen his mistake.

In fact what do we read in the very opening of the Bible? "In the beginning God created heaven and earth, and the earth was void and empty and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God was upon the waters."

In these few words the Bible affirms two things very distinctly, viz.—

(1) that the earth and matter in general are not eternal, and, that they were brought into existence by a true creative act on the part of God;

(2) that the creation of the earth and heaven or of matter in general took place at a period quite distinct from the period of the six days mentioned afterwards.

As to the time at which the creation of the earth took place, the Bible is perfectly silent and the Church has never made any declaration whatever regarding the age of the world. God not having judged it fit to reveal it to us through His inspired writer, we leave full freedom to Geology to determine that time, if it can, and to assign as many millions of years as it pleases to the existence of the earth, knowing well that nothing will ever be proved against the Bible on this point. What we assert and know from Revelation is that God is the Creator of the earth as of every thing else: as to the knowledge of the date of the creation of the earth, it is a thing which may indeed satisfy the curiosity of a scientist, but it has nothing to do with Revelation or the true Religion and the object of her teaching, viz.—faith, morals and our duties towards God, our neighbour and ourselves.

When, therefore, the author of the leaflet asserts that Geology has conclusively established that the earth has been in existence for many millions of years, he asserts nothing which can in the least tell against the teaching of the Bible. Moreover, as we shall see, by far the larger number of those who have thus established the antiquity of the earth were men who admitted fully the teaching of the Bible and who, so far from seeing the possibility of any contradiction between what they taught and what is given in the Bible, admitted that there was the most perfect concord between Geology and the Cosmogony of Moses.

2. The author of the pamphlet says: "The story of creation in six days etc., is *unscientific*."

This is surely one of the most groundless assertions ever made against the Bible. In fact, if the history of the creation as given by Moses is to be admitted as *unscientific*, it must be, I suppose, because scientists have found it to be either absurd or in contradiction with the results of modern science. Now what are the real facts?

Of the greatest scientists who have enriched the last two or three centuries with their discoveries, by far the larger number were good Catholics who sincerely believed in the truth of both the Bible and their scientific discoveries, and who, so far from rejecting the account of creation as given in the Bible, saw in all the grand discoveries of science only a confirmation of the facts which Moses wrote down under divine inspiration, several thousand years ago.

In order to convince the readers that I am making no exaggeration, I will simply write down the names of some of the great scientists who believed in the Bible and then ask them whether it be true that scientists are against the teaching of the Bible.

Great scientists: Copernicus, Galileo, Gassendi, Maraldi, Castelli, Bianchini, Cassini, Picard, De Vico, Piazzi, Secchi, Le Verrier, Torricelli, Borelli, Mersenne, Descartes, Pascal, Grimaldi, Mariotte, Cauchy, Piccolomini, Monges, Chasles, Biot, Nollet, Vietti, Lesueur, Fresnel, Malus, Fizeau, Ampere, Fourier, Dulong, Petit, Regnault, Nobili, Leonardo da Vinci, Colonna, Bourgeois, Johannes Muller, Galvani, Volta, Coulomb, Gramme, Plante, Melloni, Bertholet, Lavoisier, Dumas, Becquerel, Chevreul, Gay-Lussac, Hauy, Buffon, Daubenton Boscovitch, Lagrange, Pasteur etc. etc. If to this list be added the names of Kepler, Newton, Herschell, Euler, Leibnitz, Linnœus, Cuvier, Reaumur, De Quatrefage etc. etc., who all believed sincerely in the creation as related by Moses, it will surely be hard to understand what a man means when he says that the creation as given by Moses is unscientific.

I cannot here refrain from quoting the following passage from one of the most eminent mathematicians and physicists of modern times who had the honour of continuing the work of Laplace, in solving some of the most difficult problems in modern transcendental analysis and of founding a new school of mathematical science. The immortal Cauchy says in his "Religious Orders": "I am a Christian; that is, I believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, with Tycho Brahe, Copernicus, Descartes, Newton, Fermat, Leibnitz, Pascal, Grimaldi, Euler, Boscovitch, and Gerdil, together with the great astronomers, physicists, and geometers of past ages. And with the greater part of them, *I am also a Catholic* and should any one ask me the reason I should give it with pleasure. He would see that my *convictions are not the fruit* of *preoccupations proceeding from birth*, but the *result of a most profound investigation*.........I am a sincere catholic, as were Corneille, Racine, Bossuet' Bourdaloue and Fenelon; *as have been* and *are*, many of the most distinguished men of our day, who have done honour to science, philosophy, and literature, and added lustre to our academies more than all others besides. I share the profound convictions manifested in the works, discourses and *lives* of so many *savants* of the first order: the Ruffinis,the Haüys, the Laeünecs, the Aomperes the Pelletiers, the Freycinets, the Cariolis and if I do not name those who still live, fearing lest I should offend their modesty, I can at least say, that it has always been most grateful to me to meet all the nobility and all the generosity of Christian faith in my illustrious friends: in the founder of Crystallography, in the inventor of Chemistry, and of the Stethoscope, and in the immortal author of Dynamical Electricity."

The late lamented and illustrious Pasteur used to say: "It is truly wonderful to see how the more I study science, the simpler and stronger my faith in the Catholic Religion grows. I have already, I believe, the faith of a *Breton* (a man from Britanny, a country famed for the firm and simple faith of its inhabitants) and if things go on at that rate, I do not despair to obtain the faith of a *Bretonne*" (a woman of Britanny whose faith is still simpler.)

3. One point more remains to be considered, for the author of the leaflet says that, because the story of creation in six days is unscientific and geology has proved that the earth has been in existence for many millions of years, the believers in the Bible are driven to many a pitiable shift to escape from the scientific facts that stand in the way of the credibility of the Bible.

. Is it true, then, that the Bible and geology are in conflict? The masters of geology will let us know the answer.* And first of all, are the teachings of geology so very sure? Are they not in many instances a mere conjecture? At one time it was thought that the manifold revolutions of which geology speaks as having taken place in the earth's crust, were brought about by the action of fire; at another time it was held that water was the all-powerful

* For a full exposition of the question see John A. Zahn's book: "The Catholic Church and Modern Science," from which we have taken a part of the solution of the present question.

agent in the changes observed. Again it was supposed that the effect of upheaval and subsidence, of mountain and continent making, were brought about suddenly and violently, like our present volcanoes and earthquakes. Now it is thought that the same effect may be accounted for by the show operation of known causes which are still in action. Who can assure us that, in a few years, a new theory will not be brought into account for these same facts.

Thus we see, from these instances, that modern science, excepting facts and phenomena, is, at best, nothing more than a conjecture, and the changes in the teaching of geology mentioned above must be a warning to us not to accept too easily every new theory that may be started, but to wait until it is confirmed by facts.—

Now what do geologists say of the teaching of the Bible and of facts made known to us by geology ?

(*a*) "The description given by Moses" said Buffon many years back, "is an exact and true description of the creation of the universe and of the origin of all things."

(*b*) "It is materially proved" wrote the great Linnæus "that Moses wrote and could not have written but under the direct inspiration of the author of nature."

(*c*) Cuvier the founder of Paleontology, the science of fossils of extinct species has these striking words: "Moses has left us a cosmogony the perfect truth of which is wonderfully made more apparent every day. The recent geological observations are in perfect harmony with the book of Genesis about the order in which organised bodies were created."

(*d*) "The order in which organised bodies appeared, as taught by geology" said the illustrious Ampere, "is precisely the very same as is given in the six days of creation in the Bible. Moses, therefore, must either have possessed a knowledge as deep as our own or have been inspired."

(*e*) "We cannot too much remark" says Demerson, "this admirable order, so exactly according with the soundest notions which form the basis of positive geology. What homage ought we not to render to the inspired historian!"

(*f*) "Here," exclaims Boubee, "we are met by a reflection which cannot fail to strike us. Since a book, written at a time when the natural sciences were so little advanced, contains nevertheless, in a few lines, the summary of the most remarkable consequences, at which it could not be possible to arrive otherwise than by the immense progress made in the 18th and 19th centuries; since these conclusions are connected with facts, which were neither known nor even suspected at the time, nor ever had been till our days, and which philosophers have ever considered contradictory, and under erroneous points of view; since, in fine, that book so superior to its age in scientific knowledge, is equally superior in morals, and in natural philosophy, we are obliged to admit that there is in that book something superior to man, something which he sees not, which he comprehends not, but which presses upon him irresistibly." Similar testimonies to the truth of the scientific facts contained in the Bible might be quoted from Buckland, the distinguished geologist, Aubusson, Chambard, Bertrand, Margerin, Champollion, Remusat, Nodier, Eusebe de Salles, Bourdon, Dumas, the secret ary of the Academy of sciences Paris and his two great masters Faraday and De La Rive. Agazzis one of the greatest modern naturalists, Becquerel of the Academy of sciences, Paris, Cauchy Baumgarter, Chevienl, Samuel Haughton, Naudrn, D'Halloy, President of the Royal Academy of sciences in Belgium, Gabriel Stokes, perpetual

Secretary of the Royal Society, London, Le Conte, one of the greatest lights of science in America, Dawson, Vice President of the Section of Natural History, America, etc., etc.

With how much truth then could the immortal Cauchy address those words to scientists: "Cultivate with ardour and zeal the whole series of natural sciences; unfold to our astonished view all the wonders of nature; explore, as far as possible, all the parts of the universe; consult all the monuments of past ages; so far from feeling any alarm at such researches, I will encourage them with all my power. I am not afraid ever to see truth contradicting herself or our sacred books not in harmony with the facts and documents collected by you."

I might quote many similar passages from the greatest scientists; but space will not allow me to do so.

I ask the author of the leaflet to give me anything of the kind in favour of the cosmogony of the Hindu Sastras. Let him name great scientists and discoverers who have devoted their lives to the pursuit of science and the study of the Hindu Sastras and have found harmony between them.

4. "But" says the author of the leaflet "what about the six days of creation? Does not the Bible say that the world was created within six days? Does not this teaching contradict geology which asserts that enormous periods of time must have elapsed since the beginning of the formation of the earth?"

(a) I have already shown above that the creation of the matter and of the earth was quite distinct from the work of the six days and that there is no contradiction on this point between Geology and the Bible.

(b) The quotations given above from the greatest geologists would be enough to show that the Bible also with regard to the work of the six days is not in opposition to geology.

In order, however, to clear all doubt, I will add a few remarks on this point The Church, who alone has the right of interpreting the Bible, has never pronounced that the 6 days were to be understood as days of 24 hours, although individuals may have believed that the days were to be taken as natural days; individual opinion is not what must guide us in the interpretation of the Bible.

Moroever, the opinion that the days were not solar days, but periods of time just as geology and astronomy demand, is the opinion most prevalent among Christians,most in harmony with the Bible and held by the greatest doctors of the Church from the very first ages.

In fact, the word *day*, which we find in the translation of the Bible, is in the original Hebrew text *yom* which, St. Augustin said already in the fifth century, means indefinite period of *time* as well as *day*, the Hebrew language having only one word to express both ideas.

That the word *yom* in this passge of the Bible means indefinite period of time is evident from the fact that, according to the Bible itself, the sun did not appear until the fourth day; consequently there was no alternation of day and night as we now know it, and no way of dividing time into days of 24 hours each. Therefore the first three *days* were not natural days as we understand them at present. Further the Bible uses the very same words for the other three *days* and the seventh *day* which began after the creation of man has not yet come to its and it is, therefore, evident that by the word *yom* the Hebrew writer meant period of time.

The thing becomes still more manifest if we take the second chapter of Genesis where the six *days* themselves put together are called by the word *yom*, day. "These are the generations of the heaven and the earth, when they were created; in the *day (yom)* that the Lord God made the heaven and the earth." But this interpretation is not a new one, or one that has been provoked by the advance of modern science and the desire of conciliating the Jewish cosmogony with the teaching of geology; for, we find it already propounded by the earliest doctors of the Church such as St. Justin the philosopher, St. Gregory Naziansen, St. Basil, St. Cæsarius, Origen, St. Athanasius. St. Augustin in the 5th century says in his masterly work on Genesis that he inclines to the opinion, as being the more reasonable, that the *days* spoken of were indefinite periods of time. St. Thomas Aquinas, after his master Albertus Magnus, says that the opinion of indefinite period is the one that pleases him best.

I hope that what has been written and said on this question of the creation will have convinced my readers that there is no ground of truth in the assertion of the author of the leaflet and that the Bible, so far from fearing the progress of science, has cnly to rejoice at it, since every new fact of science is a confirmation of its own truth.

5th. OBJECTION.

The author of the leaflet says: "The Bible contains evident exaggerations. Mathuselah lived 969 years, Enos 905 years etc..."

ANSWER. There is no historical fact so well authenticated as that of the longevity of the ancient patriarchs.

Here is what the celebrated historian Josephus could write more than I800 years ago: "*All the historians of the world, those of Greece as well as those of all other nations, bear testimony to the longevity of the first men. Manethon, the Egyptian Annalist; Berosus, the Chaldean Annalist; Moschus, Hestiaeus, Jerom of Egypt and the Phænician historians, assert the same thing. Hesiodus, Hecatacus, Acusilaus, Ephorus and Nicholaus, from Damas, relate that men, in the early ages, lived upwards of 1000 years.*" (*Joseph us Antiquit. I—IV.*)

Any one may see in the work of Hesiodus called: "The Works and the Days," the line 130 which asserts the common tradition of the longevity of the first men. Upon which Pliny makes the following reflections: "*These are no poetical fictions, but the exact expression of real facts which, moreover, are seriously shown to be true by those who observe natural phenomena and enquire into historical truths.*" (*Hist. Nat.* VII. XLVIII).

Warron quoted by Lactantius and Valerius Maximus (*Book* XIII. *De Senectute*) speaks in the same strain.

In the Annals of China, the period between two almost consecutive reigns, Hoang-Ti (the Chinese Adam) and Yao (the European Japhet) comprise nearly 2000 years.

I might quote many instances of the common belief of the Hindus about the very old age attained by their earlier Rishis but I presume the author of the leaflet does not believe in the history of his own country,

At any rate, I have given him the testimonies of Non-Christian historians to the truth of one of the facts contained in the Bible and I wait to see how he will deny the weight of so many authorities. Let him not, however, merely assert in a

pitying tone, that the Bible contains evident exaggerations, but let him give proofs for his assertions; I might here show how modern science can very well account for the longevity of the men who lived in the early ages, but this would take more space than I can well afford to spare. I refer him to the works of Buffon, Deluc, Wallerius, Burnet, Ray, Sturm, Moigno, Nicholas etc., which will give him all possible information concerning the present subject.

Let the author consult some of the recent Archeological discoveries in Egypt and he will see his astonishment disappear at the sight of the facts of the Bible being all confirmed by the ancient monuments of that country. Books containing those precious documents may be had in any good first rate library.

After having answered in full the first four or five questions and having vindicated the Bible from the gratuitous assertions of the author of the leaflet, I suppose I may be permitted to reply more briefly to the remaining difficulties, specially as they contain no new facts connected with modern scientific discoveries and have been answered hundreds of times, a fact which the author either knows not or pretends not to know.

6th. OBJECTION.

Objection.—"The Bible makes God childish at times."

Answer.—As to the difficulty from *Exodus* and the accusation of childishness brought forward against God, I would advise the author of the leaflet first of all, to get a copy of the true Bible and then to give us, not in a truncated or abridged form, but in full, the whole passage. It will then be made apparent that *he* and *not God* is childish.

As to the punishment inflicted by God upon those who disobey him, I would simply remind him that, when a thing has been consecrated to God, it is simply a sacrilege to profane it. Such has ever been the opinion of all those who have believed in God.

7th. OBJECTION.

Objection.—"The morality ascribed to God in the Bible is often degrading."

(*a*) "God hardened Pharaoh's heart" (*Exod. VII 13.*)

Answer.—The passage referred to in the true Bible runs as follows: "And: Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them. And the Lord said to Moses: Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he will not let the people go"—

That is, God had made, in order to convince and convert Pharaoh, miracles such as He had never done for any one else and yet Pharaoh, of his own free will and out of malice, refused to listen to the voice of God and thus made himself unworthy to receive any further grace. God, therefore, might in a certain sense, be said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart, not indeed, by being the efficient cause of his hardness of heart, but by permitting it, and by withdrawing extraordinary grace from him in punishment of his malice, which alone was proper cause of his being hardened and just as in the case with every sinner who, is in spite of the many graces bestowed upon him by God, refuses to receive them.

In a like manner,this "Plain Answer," although written with the best of intentions and in order to enlighten the author of the leaflet, might be said to harden

his heart because in spite of the evidence of the arguments brought forward, I am afraid the author will not admit that he was wrong.

(*b*) "God commanded the massacre of many people"—or, as Ingersoll puts it "God ordered the murder of millions."

ANSWER.—1. God never commanded or authorized the massacre of any one, for *murder or massacre* is an *unjust killing*. Now God being the Creator is the Author and Giver of life and those He places on this earth he can remove at his will. Having the right to remove them at his will he has the right to select the method of removal, whether by old age, disease, the sword or by what we call accident. To deny this right to God is to deny His existence.

It follows, therefore, that when God ordered the just execution of the Canaanites it was not a command to commit murder.

3. As to the Canaanites, they were guilty of death, although they were not put to death, but driven from Palestine. Read the 18th chapter of *Leviticus* or the book of "*Wisdom*" and then you will see whether the natural expulsion or extermination of these beastly people full of unparalleled wickedness and filthy abominations was not perfectly just.

Yet God, as is related in the book of *Wisdom*, in His mercy, did not destroy them all at once but gave them many graces in order that they might be converted from their wicked ways "giving them place for repentance for their sins, giving them time and place whereby they might be changed from their wickedness."—Here then, we find that those people were sorcerers, murderers of their own children, offering them with their own hands in sacrifice to idols, man-eaters and committing the most unheard-of and filthiest abominations. On the other hand we learn the merciful way in which God warned them and gave them time and place for repentance. When they rejected His mercy He punished them with justice and the author of the leaflet accuses Him of murder. Those who, knowing the crimes of these people, condemn the punishment inflicted on them are *as guilty as they.*

(*c*) As to the difficulty *about Jehu and God approving* his crimes, a few lines will show the futility of the assertion.

Jehu obeyed the command of God who had ordered him to destroy the whole house of the sacrilegious, impious and idolatrous king Achab who had introduced the abominable worship of Baal among the Hebrews.—It is not question of seventy children but of seventy men, (in latin *viros*) sons of Achab.—It is not said that God approved the hypocrisy of Jehu but simply his obedience in executing His orders by rooting out the worship of Baal. God being the master of life and death, Jehu obeying the command of God might just as much be called a murderer as the Magistrate who condmns a criminal or the executioner who despatches him.

(*d*) About the *slaughter* by God of the men of Bethshemeth a very few words will do to solve the difficulty. The men were guilty of a sacrilege in doing what God had positively forbidden them to do and God sent them a plague as He often does to punish a sacrilege. Just as well might God be called a murderer because He sends us *cholera* now and then in order to punish us, for our sins and at the same time to warn us to be ever ready to die and appear before Him.

8th OBJECTION.

" The Bible teaches what is positively unrighteous."

A. " Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."— We know what to think of the accusation that God by condemning a man to die *commits a murder*. As to the *sorceresses* of whom it was question among the Hebrews, they were the very persons who were instrumental in introducing the horrible worship and crimes which we have seen common among the Canaanites and in inducing the Hebrews to abandon the worship of the true God in order to adore gods, who like Moloch, required that men should offer their own children in sacrifice by throwing them in some red-hot furnace.

B. Concerning the meat which the Jews were ordered to give "into the stranger that is in the gate" the author of the leaflet would have done well had he but read the Bible instead of accepting his accusation from hear-say. It is not question there of *unwholesome* meat, as he says, but of meat which the Jews were legally forbidden to touch, such as, for instance, the flesh of animals which had died of starvation, by drowning or from suffocation etc., and which could very well be given to other nations which were not bound by the same laws as the Jews.

Suppose a strict vegetarian in India were to give his cow or bullock which had just died of starvation of through some accident to some other people who are allowed to eat such meat, could we call his action unrighteous.

C. As to the vindictiveness of David, I refer the author to the true Bible and to the commentary that is added at the bottom of the page where the Psalm 108 is to be found. There he will see that the imprecations contained in the thirty verses are opposed to the thirty pieces of silver for which Judas betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ; as may be seen found in St. Peter's speech (Acts I. *20*.) and are to be taken as prophetic denunciations of the evils that should befall the traitor and not properly as curses.

D. "Of the heathen that are around you etc."

Answer.—1. God did not *order* the Hebrews to buy slaves but *allowed* them to do so.

2. Nobody will ever prove that bondage *as it was practised among the Hebrews* is against the natural law.

3. Slaves were to be treated with kindness and enjoyed many privileges (*Exod.* XII, *44*; XX, *10*; XXI, *2—6 and 7—11*. *Levit.* XXV, *6*; *Deut.* X, 14; XV, 12—18; XII, 18 *etc*.

N. B. These difficulties about the morality of the Bible raised in America not very long ago by Ingersoll have been amply disposed of by Rev. L. A. Lambert a Catholic Priest in his two excellent books: *Answers to atheists or Notes on Ingersoll* and *Tactics of Infidels*.

All who are in earnest in seeking for truth are strongly advised to read these books. Want of time and space has prevented the author of this " *Plâin Answer* " from giving *in extenso* all the arguments that might still be brought forward in defense of the Bible nor does he intend to take any further notice of similar attacks than beyond referring the writer to the learned commentaries, approved by the Church, that have been written to explain the true meaning of the Bible and refute the objections that have been raised against it.

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